



## Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

July 1, 2003

The Honorable Naptali Peter  
Mayor  
Enewetak-Ujelang Local Government  
P.O. Box 1199  
Majuro, Marshall Islands 96960

Dear Mayor Peter:

I enjoyed meeting with you in San Francisco, California, and recall that two issues dominated the discussion of Enewetak Atoll at the annual meeting: (1) Long-term stewardship of Runit Dome; and (2) Resettlement of Enjebi Island.

The long-term stewardship of Runit Dome is not part of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) congressional mandate regarding the Marshall Islands. Resolution of the stewardship issue rests with the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government and/or with the U.S. Congress in the context of the request in the Government of the Marshall Islands' Changed Circumstances for ongoing, structural-engineering evaluation of the dome. DOE will, however, continue to monitor the plants, animals, and ground water around the dome as part of our Memorandum of Understanding with Enewetak.

Your concern about Runit is based on your view that a significant amount of plutonium is leaching from the contents within the dome into the surrounding environment. Although there is some exchange going on between Runit crater and the lagoon and open ocean, Dr. Terry Hamilton of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory reported at the San Francisco meeting that the major source of plutonium is the Fig/Quince contamination resulting from safety tests conducted during the U.S. nuclear testing period.

You also requested additional plutonium resuspension studies on Runit Island; Dr. Hamilton indicated that he could do the additional studies if DOE provided the funding. Because our mission is to support resettlement, and Runit Island will not be resettled, we do not see how we can support additional resuspension studies. I trust you would agree that using limited DOE funding to move ahead with environmental characterization of Enjebi would be the best use of resources since it will support a desired community resettlement goal. Such characterization work could be planned as soon as the island has been extensively de-brushed by your workers as Dr. Hamilton described at the San Francisco meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Steven V. Cary".

Steven V. Cary  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for Health Studies



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